No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-242-4-11-6

artment of Political Science

YORK
UNIVERSITY

GLENDON COLLEGE
2275 BAYVIEW AVENUE
TORONTO 12, ONTARIO, CANADA

July 29, 1969

Robert Hall
Editor & Publisher
The Warrensburg-Lake George News
Warrensburg, New York 12885

Dear Rob:

I believe you may be interested in the fact that last SAturday morning, July 26th, 1969 I spent three hours in a discussion of the present Vietnam deadlock with Xuan Thuy, the head of the RDVN delegation at the Paris talks, during which I believe he indicated a serious interest in certain of my ideas on the ways in which the present deadlock might be broken and the modalities which would advance a settlement.

Xuan Thuy, whom I had known as my host during a visit to the jungle headquarters of Ho Chi Minh in February, 1953 prior to their defeat of the French, welcomed me most warmly. I had asked for the interview by letter and was invited by them to come, and the discussion which ranged a wide exchange of views, was informal. Mr. Thuy was told that I intended to make this interview known to influential people in Washington, if they are interested, and he expressed a readiness to talk with me again late in August when other business will bring me through Paris.

I should say at the outset that without any contact whatsoever on the American side, I was prepared for this interview by my own experience in Vietnam 15 years ago, and by a long luncheon in Rome one week earlier with M. Raymond Aubrac, who is a functionary of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, and who was, exactly two summers ago, the person that went to Hanoi after meeting with Mr. Henry Kissinger and others in Paris. Aubrac is a friend of close French friends of mine and received me without hesitations and conversed at length with respect to his views of the present moment. I met also, on the eve of this interview, with M. Philippe Devillers, of the Fondation Nationale de Sciencesx Politiques in Paris, who is also a close friend of mine and a foremost French authority on Vietnam . It seemed evident to me that this was a good moment to talk with the Vietnamese since Xuan Thuy himself had only recently returned from Hanoi (having been equally well received in Peking and in Moscow enroute) and it was also the moment when no progress was being made in PAris and it was the week that Mr. Nixon was touring southeast Asia prior to whatever new initiatives are to be made from the American side.

Without indicating the entire substance and context of the conversations, I can say this: although in summation Xuan Thuy repeated the well-known North Vietnam stand that no progress can be made until there is a complete US withdrawal and the Thieu-Ky-Huong government in Saigon is abandoned, in the course of listening to my proposals, Thuy interrogated me on several points indicating at least an intellectual interest in a pattern of modalities for a settlement which I set forth. He also commented on my ideas with respect to the longer-term relations of North Vietnam and the United States.

I have no great need to insert myself into the diplomatic arena, but it may be of interest in Washington to Mr Henry Kissinger, for example, that this exchange took place and I will be flying to western Europe from Toronto or Montreal on August 15th as part of another study during which stay at the end of August I shall no doubt see Mr. Xuan Thu

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two)
memo to Robert Hall

It is not without interest that in addition to the notes made by our interpreter(I spoke in English) one of Thuy's aides took the most detailed notes of what was said, and beyond doubt the entire episode will have by now been communicated to Hanoi.

If anyone of authority in Washington wants to discuss the matter with me, I am in Hancock, Mass. as of this weekend and could come to Washington in this coming week. I can be reached at 413 738 4962 in Hancock and have this next week available. I shall be in Los Angeles as of the evening of August 8 through the 11th at my daughter-in-law's and then return to Toronto prior to leaving via Montreal for Amsterdam on August 15th. I would be available via Los Angeles the 12th and 13th. In Los Angeles 213-656-9984 and in Toronto 416 481 4843.

The basic point of interest is that Xuan Thuy questioned me at some length on certain modalities which I proposed. In my view, " mutual withdrawal" of armed forces by both the US side and the North Vietnam side --to which the North has been opposed--could be distinguished from " simultaneous withdrawal" which did not, indeed, have to be mutual in the sense of anything more than each side would in fact withdraw without necessarily a mutual engagement to do so.

Another basic point was that I argued in favor of letting the Paris negotiations go beyond the present stage of deadlock into two commissions--a military commission charged with working out military matters, including withdrawals of all forces, and a political commission charged with making detailed comparisons of the various points made by the Front for National Liberation, the Thieu government and President Nixon himself over the past months. I suggested that the deadlock could be broken if the matter went into a " commission" phase and I was closely questioned in this regard.

I outlined in broad terms my own view of the present phase of U S policy, affirming that I believed the Nixon administration was moving toward a detente with both Russia and China and that within this framework was seriously interested in a Vietnam settlement. It was my view, among many other matters, that it was in the Vietnam interest, more exactly the north Vietnam interest, that the United States retain an economic role with respect to a country which was likely, for the very reason of the experience of war, to be a most dynamic factor in the economic regeneration of Southeast Asia. Xuan Thuy made significant comments on these points, notably the latter.

It was also my argument that from the Vietnamese side, both north and south, that is, the Communist side a much more flexible policy was possible and was justified by their own historical experience in 1945; I took the word " provisional" in the title of the Provisional Revolutionary Government seriously and pointed out that Gen. Thieu could be considered not only as head of state but as the leader of a distinct political formation, and that instead of anticipating a political disintegration in Saigon, as the Communists evidently do, it might be in their interest to prevent anything like a repetition of the Chiang Kai-shek affair. All this was listened to with great attention.

I am prepared to give a complete summary of these matters, plus some other ideas, to an[illegible]

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Background on JR Starobin

Joseph R Starobin is presently a professor of political science at Glendon College, York University, having previously lectured at Yale University and has been taking his degree at Columbia University.

He was in 1966-67 a Senior Fellow at the Research Institute on Communist Affairs, at Columbia.

His most current writing will be found in the July, 1969 Foreign Affairs, "Origins of the Cold War: The Communist Dimension"

Earlier articles include a discussion of the Crisis of Western European Communism in Foreign Affairs, October, 1965 , a piece in The New Leader July 28, 1966 outlining possible modalities of a Vietnam settlement, and articles for Problems of Communism , Nov-Dec. 1966 recalling the events of 1956 and others.

An old book of his, Eyewitness in Indo-China recently re-published by Greenwood Press, is reviewed in the July 20, 1969 New York Times.

Starobin was in the 40s and into the early 50s the foreign editor of The Daily Worker, as well as its UN editor and travelled widely to Latin America, Europe, the Soviet Union in 1948-53 and spent a year in Communist China in 1952-53 during which time he visited Ho Chi Minh and his closest co-workers just before their victory over the French. That was in February-March, 1953, and his account of that experience formed the basis of the now-republished book.

Having come to know a very great many of the men now directing Communist parties in many countries, especially in western Europe, he retained an intellectual contact with them in the 15 years since his separation from the American Communist Party. He is now studying the " Crisis of the Western European Left" on a grant from The Canada Council.

Xuan Thuy, head of the North Vietnam delegation at the Paris talks, was his host in northern Vietnam in 1953 and received him on July 26, 1969 at the Delegation's quarters in Choisy-Le-Roi, Paris.

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